NEWS FROM THE FEDERAL FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

An interview between Walter G. Campbell, Chief, Food and Drug Administration, and Morse Salisbury, Associate Director of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture. Broadcast Friday, January 26, 12:40-12:48 E.S.T., in the Department portion of the National Farm and Home Hour, over 90 stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:

Morse Salisbury is with us today --- and with him is Walter G. Campbell, Chief of the Food and Drug Administration. Mr. Campbell is going to tell us what every consumer should know about the labeling provisions of the New Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. We'll hear first from Mr. Salisbury.

MORSE SALISBURY:

Last summer Mr. Campbell told this audience about the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938, and what it provides in the way of added protection for the public health and pocketbook. All the new labeling provisions became effective the first day of this month. Mr. Campbell, I've heard you state that from now on, reading labels -- on foods, drugs, and cosmetics -- will be pretty important.

WALTER G. CAMPBELL:

Yes, more important than ever before. Labeling requirements of the new law are very different from those of the old law. The old law was largely negative. It merely forbade the making of false statements. The new law requires that labels include a great many important facts.

SALISBURY:

Well now, as a consumer, can I go into a retail store and buy a medicine, for example, and by reading the label, find out exactly what's in that medicine?

CAMPBELL:

Not just yet, Mr. Salisbury. Although the law was passed on June 25, 1938, and the important health provisions became effective at once, Congress allowed manufacturers a period of grace -- until January 1, 1940 -- for the preparation of new labels. In some cases, this period of grace will be extended to next July.

SALISBURY:

What are the industries doing about the new label provisions?

CAMPBELL:

In general, manufacturers are making a great effort to comply with all the new labeling provisions which apply to foods and drugs -- and cosmetics.

SALISBURY:

But I understand that for cosmetics, even more important than the labeling provisions is the sweeping prohibition against dangerous products.

CAMPBELL:

That is true.

SALISBURY:

The prohibitions against poisonous eyelash dyes and things of that sort. Now what about the labels required for medicines?

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CAMPBELL:

That's where you find the biggest change. The label must show the weight or measure, the name and address of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor, and the common or usual name of the product.

SALISBURY:

That means Epsom salts will be known as Epsom salts.

CAMPBELL:

And not by a fancy name, implying that the product is a rare and costly article. One of the most important provisions of the law, from the standpoint of removing some of the mystery from the medicine business, is the requirement that medicines be labeled with the name of each active ingredient. The law names many potent drugs which must be declared, not only by name, but also in the quantity or proportion.

SALISBURY:

I suppose these drugs that must be quantitatively declared include such products as alcohol.

CAMPBELL:

Yes, alcohol, chloroform, acetanilide, and a long list of others which may cause severe reactions if taken unwittingly. The law also requires that if a medicine contains any one of a long list of habit-forming drugs, the name of the drug, and the proportion, must be plainly printed, together with a statement reading clearly: "Warning -- May Be Habit-Forming." These habit-forming drugs include morphine, opium, cocaine, barbituric acid, marihuana, and many others.

SALISBURY:

Well, that warning label is a good safeguard. Of course all labels on medicines must give directions for use.

CAMPBELL:

That's true, and if there are conditions under which use of the medicine would be dangerous, then the label must carry a warning against over-dosage, or unwise dosage. Some drugs are highly valuable when administered under a doctor's orders, but highly dangerous when administered by a layman. Drugs of this type will carry statements warning consumers against their use -- except under a physician's orders.

SALISBURY:

Now what about food labels?

CAMPBELL:

The law provides a very precise and somewhat complicated procedure for establishing definitions and standards of identity for foods, and a reasonable standard of quality, condition, and fill of container.

SALISBURY:

That means, I take it, that if a product like canned tomatoes, for example, has been standardized, it will be illegal to sell that product as canned tomatoes, unless it meets the requirements.

CAMPBELL:

That's correct. As a matter of fact, definitions and standards for canned tomatoes have already been set up. One of the quality requirements for canned

CAMPBELL: (cont.)

tomatoes is that they must have a certain degree of red color. If they are poor in color, or yellow, or green, instead of red, they must be labeled, "Below standard in quality. Poor color." Food labels, in general, will contain the name of the product, net weight or net volume, and the name of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor. If no standard has been set up for the food, and of course it will be impossible to standardize everything, the various ingredients must be declared, also any artificial color or flavor.

SALISBURY:

Now you've told us some of the label requirements of the new law. What about enforcing it?

CAMPBELL:

As I mentioned a while ago, the public health provisions have been in effect since June 25, 1938 -- a year and a half. During that time we have taken legal action against 1,064 shipments, including dangerous cosmetics, dangerous devices, dangerous drugs, decomposed and filthy foods, and, more recently, against certain types of economic cheats. You may have noticed, Mr. Salisbury, that a great many of the ten-cent brands of toothpaste used to come in cartons so large that you could fit at least a couple of the tubes inside the pastboard carton -- and even then have some extra room.

SALISBURY:

Yes, I've often thought there was a lot of waste space in some of those toothpaste cartons. Have your inspectors included these deceptive containers in their campaign?

CAMPBELL:

They have, and the result is a united effort on the part of toothpaste manufacturers to re-design their cartons to fit the size of the tubes. I think I'm safe in predicting that within the next six months, toothpaste users will be buying much less pasteboard than heretofore.

SALISBURY:

That suits me. I've never found much use for all that pasteboard.

CAMPBELL:

Neither has anyone else. Other "economic frauds" dug up in our drag net of deceptive packages, include such products as face creams, sold in thick, opaque glass jars. In a good many cases, the amount of cream was considerably less than the amount of glass. But the manufacturers are now re-designing their jars, and consumers will be buying more face cream and less glass. The other day our inspectors found some packages of spices -- in boxes with shaker tops. The amount of spice barely covered the bottom of the box. Under the new law, this type of deception is going to become thoroughly unpopular.

SALISBURY:

What about the extract bottles with thick panelled sides, and the candy boxes with false bottoms?

CAMPBELL:

They're on the way out. You'll see fewer and fewer of these economic cheats. under the pressure of legal action, this kind of container is being rapidly re-designed. Of course you're bound to find some of these frauds on the retailer's shelves, during the period of readjustment. These reforms can't be put into effect over night.

SALISBURY:

Now would you tell us, briefly, about the "new drug" section of the law.

CAMPBELL:

I'll be glad to. As everybody knows, before the passage of the new law, distribution of untested drugs caused several major catastrophes, and the loss of many lives. Congress, reacting energetically to the need for public protection against this sort of hazard, included in the new law a requirement that no new drug could be shipped, within the jurisdiction of the law, unless this drug had been proved safe for use, under conditions prescribed in the labeling. This provision of the law has kept us very busy. Between June 25, 1938, and January 1, 1940, we have received over 2,000 applications, every one of which had to be carefully investigated. More than 1,500 of the drugs investigated were considered safe for use. The others were considered unsafe -- or else they are still under investigation.

SALISBURY:

I suppose you went into a pretty thorough investigation of the new drug, sulfaphyridine, which I understand is proving very successful in pneumonia cases.

CAMPBELL:

Yes, Medical men report remarkable success with sulfapyridine. We received the application from the manufacturers of that drug just about a year ago. Our medical officers reviewed more than 2,000 clinical reports of cases in which the drug had been used, representing the experience of about 100 physicians. Sulfapyridine must be taken only under a doctor's orders, because without proper medical supervision, serious complications are quite likely to result.

SALISBURY:

Well, it looks as if the "new drug" section of the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act will be of great benefit to the general public -- to all consumers who read and follow the information on the labels.

Thank you very much, Mr. Campbell, for this brief report of some of the work of your Administration.

WALLACE KADDERLY:

Farm and Home friends, you have heard Walter G. Campbell, Chief of the Federal Food and Drug Administration, and Morse Salisbury, Associate Director of Information for the Department of Agriculture. Perhaps Mr. Campbell brought out some things here you'd like to have at hand for reference -- to read over and study. In that case, we'll be very glad to send you a copy of this discussion between Mr. Campbell and Mr. Salisbury. Here's how you can get it -- Just send a letter or a card to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., and ask for the report on foods, drugs, and cosmetics.